UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-NINTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE (FOURTH COMMITTEE)
11th meeting
held on
Thursday, 27 October 1994
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 11th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HUDYMA (Ukraine)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.4/49/SR.11
21 November 1994
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: RUSSIAN

94-81830 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 80: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/49/21, A/49/385, A/49/472)

1. Mr. MENKES (Russian Federation) said that the results of the work of the sixteenth session of the Committee on Information clearly demonstrated the seriousness and importance of the new tasks facing the international community in the sphere of information. Many of the participants at the Seminar held in May had rightly pointed to the significance of the current world-wide revolution in information and had underscored the powerful influence of information and its key role as an instrument for peace, democracy and development and for social, cultural, political and economic change.

2. The Russian Federation had firmly stated its adherence to the principles of freedom of information and freedom of the press. The convening, in Moscow, of an international conference on the mass media in a democratic society testified to how far Russia had progressed along the path of democratic development. The new Constitution of Russia expressly upheld the freedom of information and the independence of the mass media. Russia's current Constitution and the legislation being adopted by Russia on freedom of the mass media was in conformity with international standards. Russia would continue to proceed on the assumption that freedom of the mass media was a powerful means of building democratic institutions and a State governed by the rule of law, and of securing Russia's emergence as a civilized member of an international community that recognized universal human values and fundamental human rights and freedoms. In conjunction with the enactment of improved fundamental legislation, the Russian Federation was devoting considerable effort to achieving in practice the freedom of expression and of the mass media established by law, and to developing the appropriate systems of safeguards in such spheres as finance and property, and political, spiritual, cultural and organizational matters. It also had on its agenda the question of accelerating the entry into force of additional provisions governing legal protection for journalists.

3. One of the major problems facing the Russian mass media was that of securing their financial and economic independence. It involved the change in the form of ownership of the mass media and the need to adapt to the market economy.

4. His delegation noted with satisfaction that, at its spring session, the Committee on Information had successfully preserved the consensus which had characterized its work for several years, and expressed the hope that the Committee would continue to work on that basis. His delegation reiterated that it understood and sympathized with the concerns of the developing countries about the continuing imbalances in the field of information. His delegation was convinced that the best contribution towards solving that problem lay not in confrontation but in more active international cooperation.

5. With regard to the activities of the Department of Public Information, he said that, as was clear from the Secretary-General's report on questions relating to information (A/49/385), structural measures had been adopted to streamline the management of its operations. Work had been undertaken to improve the organizational structure of the Department, with the aim of establishing a clearer and more effective managerial structure. Thematically integrated priority areas, in which information played a substantive role, had been identified. Fragmentation and duplication must be avoided. Every effort was being made to maximize the involvement of the Department at the very beginning in the establishment of information components for peace-keeping.

6. The Russian Federation had previously expressed its wish for the information centre in Moscow to be more active. His delegation noted with satisfaction from the Secretary-General's report that the United Nations offices in a number of countries, including the Russian Federation, had "developed ways to reach out to the public they serve". The report contained specific guidelines for United Nations information activities in those States.

7. He took note of the work of the non-governmental organizations associated with the United Nations. They were a powerful channel for disseminating information on the United Nations, and he expressed his appreciation of the support given by the leadership of the Department to the proposition to hold, in Russia, a conference of non-governmental organizations within the Commonwealth of Independent States.

8. Cooperation between Russia and the United Nations in the provision of training for information specialists would very soon become more active; personnel from the Department of Information and the Press of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation would follow a one-month training course in the United Nations Department of Public Information. In general, Russia was prepared to do its utmost to assist in the development and adoption of the new approaches to information that would be required in order to provide objective information on the work and priorities of the United Nations to the broadest possible public, and in a manner that was acceptable and accessible to it.

9. Lastly, he said that the decisions of the Committee on Information and the report of the Secretary-General provided a sound basis for continued fruitful cooperation between the Department and the delegations of Member States in the area of information. The increase in the number of members of the Committee during the current year from 83 to 88 testified to the greater significance attached by States to information issues.

10. Mr. KOZIY (Ukraine) said that efforts to improve and add depth to United Nations information programmes and to shed light on problems related to peacemaking and economic and social development undoubtedly helped to create the indispensable conditions for establishing peace and for strengthening the link between peace-keeping operations and development-related aspects of post-conflict peace-building.

11. His delegation wished to mention the role played by the Organization in assisting the development of information structures in a number of countries. In that connection, the activities of the United Nations office in Ukraine, whose role included questions relating to information, deserved attention. The office kept track of the processes under way in Ukraine, advocated the democratic principles embodied in the Charter, disseminated information about the activities of the United Nations and the international community, and publicized democratic principles in the area of information, thereby making a valuable contribution to establishing Ukraine as a democratic State.

12. His delegation endorsed the Secretary-General's policy aimed at integrating information centres with United Nations offices on a case-by-case basis. Such an approach was the cheapest and most rational way of integrating the system of public information into the United Nations development system.

13. Development of the information infrastructure in Ukraine was an essential part of democratization, and Ukraine fully supported the principles of freedom of the press and of the dissemination of information.

14. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the proposal by Belarus concerning the develcpment and implementation of a system-wide programme for the tenth anniversary in 1996 of the Chernobyl disaster was included in draft resolution B in document A/49/21. His delegation believed that such a programme would contribute to a better understanding of the disaster and would serve as a warning for present and future generations.

15. Ukraine actively participated in United Nations peace-keeping operations and believed that the dissemination of information about the Organization's work in that area was of great importance both for the sides involved in a conflict and for those contributing personnel for peace-keeping operations. His delegation was of the view that the propagation of the ideals and principles of peacemaking should always be at the centre of the Committee's attention. In that connection, he commended the work of the Department in giving wide publicity to those operations.

16. The growing number of conflicts had led to an increase in casualties both among the peace-keeping personnel and the journalists working on the front line of the fiercest clashes. Article 79 of Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 was the only instrument dealing with the protection of journalists in armed conflicts. His delegation stressed the importance of the work relating to the protection of journalists in conflict zones being done in the Council of Europe. Ukraine believed that the United Nations could initiate the preparation of a legal instrument on the protection of journalists covering operations mandated by the United Nations. The valuable experience gained by the United Nations in elaborating the convention dealing with the safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel, which was nearing completion, could prove very useful in that undertaking, and Ukraine declared itself ready to take part in the elaboration of such an instrument.

17. His delegation was pleased to note that the resolutions adopted by the Committee at its 1993 session were being given practical expression, enabling the Organization to disseminate information about its activities in a prompt, comprehensive and effective manner and to inform the public about its tasks and objectives.

18. Mr. ABDELLAH (Tunisia) said that, in the current era of profound political, economic and social change, information stood to play an increasingly important role in securing harmony and dialogue among peoples. All peoples should enjoy equal opportunities vis-à-vis the obtention and dissemination of balanced information. To that end, coordinated efforts were required, particularly from the developed countries of the North, to assist the developing countries in building their capacities and strengthening their information and communication infrastructure. It was essential to deploy adequate human resources and to transfer technology in the field of telecommunications. His delegation supported the idea of organizing a seminar on developing and promoting pluralistic media in the Arab countries under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), on the lines of those already held in Namibia, Kazakhstan and Chile.

19. His delegation welcomed the measures that had been taken to reorganize the Department and, in particular, to improve its publications on economic and social development matters. Those efforts must be increased, since development should be given the same priority as peace-keeping in the work of the United Nations. In that connection, the Department should make every effort to achieve the objectives set forth in the Secretary-General's report "An agenda for development". Primary attention should be given to the situation in Africa, and more publications should be devoted to the problems of African countries, particularly economic and social development matters and issues related to the conduct of international conferences on social development and the situation of women. As for the financing of those activities, the Department could redirect resources released by the elimination of apartheid in South Africa which had enabled it to wind up certain of its activities, and an appropriate decision should be adopted to that effect by the General Assembly.

20. With regard to the integration of certain United Nations information centres with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) field offices, Ukraine had studied with interest the information furnished by the Secretary-General in his latest report (A/49/385). If that measure was to be effective, prior consultations must be held with the Governments of the States concerned. Furthermore, those measures should be implemented in close cooperation with the Committee on Information.

21. Mr. DUMITRIU (Romania) said that the Department should be innovative in finding ways to assist the United Nations in meeting its challenges. All forms of inertia should be resisted: priorities should be kept under permanent review and constant efforts made to harmonize the objectives of information activities with those of the various bodies and States Members of the United Nations.

22. Continued efforts must be made to ensure the more effective use of resources by concentrating them on specific priorities and by streamlining the work of the operational structures. Efforts must also be made to identify more clearly the users of the information and to evaluate the results achieved. Every decision should take due account of the ratio between cost and benefit. Technological developments should be monitored and genuine partnership established with the media throughout the world. That also implied transparency and constructive dialogue with all media and efforts to ensure the accuracy of information disseminated through various channels. Information must be politically productive. The dissemination of information was not an end in itself but a means of promoting throughout the world certain values propagated by the United Nations.

23. Romania had on previous occasions declared its support for the Secretary-General's initiative designed to integrate United Nations information centres with other United Nations offices, provided that such integration would result in an improvement of or greater efficiency in the work of the Organization. Particular attention should be paid to the observance of such principles as the preservation of the functional autonomy of the information centres, the equitable disbursement of available resources, closer coordination with the Department and the adoption of a case-by-case approach in implementing the integration policy. While it supported integration, his delegation was also fully aware of its possible negative consequences. It had received assurances from the Department that there was no intention to downgrade the centre in Romania or to diminish the support it had enjoyed thus far.

24. With regard to the role of media and other institutions in a democratic society, he stressed that the dismantling of the totalitarian structures in Romania had been followed by the rapid growth of independent, pluralistic media. Romanian media currently played an important role in the public debate on economic reform and political life. The media had increased their role as the main recipient and disseminator of information, both at the domestic and the international level. That role clearly implied greater responsibilities. In that connection, he stressed that the partnership between the United Nations and the media in general should also extend to a special relationship between the Department and the media in individual countries. The United Nations and the free press should jointly promote the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, commitments to international peace and security and democratic values. The success of many United Nations peace-keeping operations or major United Nations programmes in economic, social and environmental areas largely depended on their impact on public opinion in democratic societies. The media should have at their disposal accurate and objective information since that was crucial to its efforts to influence political decisions.

25. Mr. ALVAREZ (Uruguay) said that the Uruguayan delegation had studied the report of the Committee on Information on the work of its sixteenth session with interest. It had taken an active part in recent sessions of the Committee because it recognized how important the concepts described in the report were in view of the Committee's area of activity and its impact on various United Nations undertakings.

26. It was appropriate to draw attention to various matters contained in the report. The activities of the Department of Public Information in connection with peace-keeping operations warranted praise, and it should be noted that those activities were not carried out to the detriment of the dissemination of information about developmental and other social and economic issues. Particularly important was the effort to provide the necessary components in peace-keeping operations, including press and public relations components in the case of major operations with broad mandates and large contingents of civil and military staff. That would facilitate the dissemination of objective information about peace-keeping operations and thereby prevent any erosion of the confidence of Member States in the proposed settlement option.

27. The delegation of Uruguay was glad that the Department was continuing to publicize the measures taken in connection with the forthcoming World Summit on Social Development and that the proposal made at the previous session for the appointment of a coordinator for humanitarian questions had been implemented. Uruguay also noted with satisfaction the decision to integrate United Nations information centres with UNDP field offices, but in that undertaking it was important for the views of the host countries to be taken into account and for the reports on the topic submitted by the Secretary-General to the Committee on Information to contain the detailed information and documentation needed for the adoption of the corresponding decisions. Action should be taken only after preliminary consultations and notification of the Member States which determined policy in that area.

28. Caution must be exercised with regard to the establishment of new United Nations information centres and due account must be taken of the requirements of different regions. It might be possible to study alternative solutions, perhaps involving the use of local facilities and staff. An example of an alternative solution was provided by the University for Peace in Costa Rica. When considering such alternatives it was essential to put forward financially viable proposals in order to avoid situations in which the decision to open an information centre was determined by the availability, or otherwise, of funds.

29. Mr. MAXIMOV (Bulgaria) said that the dissemination and free exchange of accurate, impartial and objective information was central to the building of confidence and understanding among peoples and States, as well as to the preservation of international peace and security. Bulgaria, having set out on the path to democracy and a market economy, had already incorporated the fundamental human rights and freedoms in its new constitution and in a number of legislative acts, in particular the right to obtain and disseminate information and the freedom of expression and opinion, thus establishing the necessary conditions for the diversification of its media and creating an information system based on democratic principles and freedoms. That was a further illustration of Bulgaria's firm commitment to the ideals and goals of the United Nations and of its intention to become a full member of the world democratic community.

30. Bulgaria wished to commend the positive role of the United Nations information system in promoting democratization in the countries in transition.

It was also well aware of the needs of the developing countries and of their problems, particularly in the area of information. In that connection, special attention and support should be given to the activities designed to help the developing countries undertaken by UNESCO under its international programme for the development of communication. The Bulgarian delegation welcomed the innovative and comprehensive conceptual approach to the various information tasks described by the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information at the sixteenth session of the Committee on Information. It also welcomed the structural and organizational changes made in the Department in order to secure further streamlining, rationalization and renewal of the information activities of the United Nations and make most effective use of the meagre resources available. The Department must periodically review its priorities in its information activities and redeploy human and financial resources accordingly, concentrating them on the higher-priority areas of activity. One such area was the increased involvement of the United Nations in preventive diplomacy, peace-keeping and peacemaking. Bulgaria favoured the idea of incorporating an information component at the planning stage of any peace-keeping operation and of the appointment of a spokesperson for every larger operation.

31. Bulgaria was convinced of the paramount importance of the United Nations information centres in enhancing the role and image of the Organization and supported their integration with UNDP field offices, provided that the functional autonomy of the information components was preserved; it reiterated its interest in establishing such an information component in the UNDP office in Sofia.

32. Mr. RI Song Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the international community realized the important role of public information in the establishment of the new international political and economic order and attached great importance to the creation of a new international information and communication order; his delegation appreciated the contribution of the Department of Public Information and the Committee on Information to that undertaking. It was important to stress that the Department had improved the standards of journalists and broadcasters from developing countries by organizing seminars on information topics and offering the participants ample opportunities to extend their contacts and cooperation. The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea welcomed the Department's plan to issue, at the beginning of 1995 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, a handbook on the publishing and press organizations of the countries of the world, for that would promote stronger contacts and cooperation between such organizations. The Committee on Information also deserved commendation for its review and evaluation of information policy in the United Nations system and for its recommendations on information made in response to the changing situation.

33. However, in the field of information and communications some imbalance still existed between developing and developed countries. The latter had a monopoly of modern information technology, which they used to spread their doctrines and cultural values and distorted information reflecting their interests. His delegation considered that the matter should be discussed under the current agenda item, and that the United Nations should take action in that

regard. In order to redress the imbalance and ensure that information served the whole of humanity, priority should be given to restructuring the current information system and establishing a new world information and communication order.

34. His delegation considered it essential to strengthen and expand the network of United Nations information centres, and to give serious consideration to the views of the countries concerned on the question of integrating those centres with the UNDP offices. The Organization should also pay due attention to the improvement and enhancement of the information infrastructure and to the training of technicians and experts from the developing countries. Moreover, his delegation attached great importance to the promotion of close cooperation among Member States, in particular with a view to diversifying information and improving its methods of dissemination. In that connection, he recalled the Pyongyang Declaration, adopted at the fourth Conference of Ministers of Information of the Non-Aligned Countries, held in Pyongyang in June 1993.

35. In future, the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would establish its own sound national information base and promote cooperation and exchanges with the United Nations and with information organs in other countries, thereby fulfilling its obligations with regard to the establishment of a new world information and communication order.

36. Mr. PRASAD YADAVA (Nepal) said that in the changed world of the post-cold-war era, the United Nations stood at the forefront of communication media. The international press and the public at large had taken a keen interest in the activities of the Organization and looked to it with hope and aspiration. That was largely because of its growing role not only as an instrument of peace, democracy and development, but also as the driving force behind social, cultural, political and economic change. In that connection, DPI, as the principal communication arm of the United Nations, had to assume new responsibilities in managing, coordinating and disseminating the free flow of information, covering all the activities carried out by the United Nations. The Department must have the necessary material resources and qualified staff at its disposal, and he expressed satisfaction at the current restructuring of DPI activities, which should make it more effective in the new environment.

37. His delegation considered that DPI should provide information regarding peace-keeping operations on a continuing basis and appreciated the fact that it was providing a full range of information on such matters, for the success of such operations largely depended on how they were perceived by the international community, both in the troop-contributing countries and in those in which the missions were conducted. Equally important was coordination between DPI and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations, and he welcomed the steps that had already been taken by DPI in that direction.

38. In order to ensure the effective and rational use of the resources at its disposal, DPI should reassess its priorities. Since the United Nations had recently been focusing attention on social, cultural, political and economic issues, trying to reach as many people as possible, greater use should be made

of non-governmental organizations as another effective channel for disseminating such information at the grass-roots level. His delegation fully supported the idea of DPI bringing out publications of that kind in local languages and was gratified that "An Agenda for Peace" had been issued in the Nepali language.

39. Radio was an extremely cost-effective means of reaching a wide audience. He therefore appreciated the Department's assurance that it intended to expand its partnership with Member States in the preparation and distribution of radio products. It was for that reason that his delegation requested the inclusion of information in the Nepali language in the United Nations radio programme.

40. Mr. Myung Hwan YU (Republic of Korea) said that access to the free flow of information was a legitimate right of all peoples of the world. In the context of the goals of the United Nations, the free exchange of information was one of the fundamental ways of building mutual understanding and tolerance among peoples of different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds.

41. However, as long as there were disparities between the developed and developing countries in the field of information technology and human resources, the international community could not fully benefit from the exchange of information. In his delegation's view, the international community should continue to make financial contributions and provide technological support to the developing countries in order to promote the exchange of information with the developed world. At the same time, DPI which was the focal point of information activities in the United Nations, should strengthen its cooperation with UNDP, UNICEF and other United Nations bodies. The Government of the Republic of Korea, which was a strong advocate of "South-South" cooperation, would continue its efforts to help to initiate and build communication projects for developing countries through its Economic Development and Cooperation Fund. It would also maintain its annual contribution to the Trust Fund of the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication, as well as its interest in the Training Programmes which had been launched in 1984 with a view to promoting technology sharing with other developing countries.

42. With regard to DPI, his delegation considered that its activities had made a favourable impact on public opinion concerning peace-keeping operations, especially in the troop-contributing States. However, there was still room for improvement in that area, particularly in providing better information to the local population in countries hosting peace-keeping missions. As for the Weekly Digest on the activities of United Nations peace-keeping missions, a publication of the Department of Peace-keeping Operations which had been discontinued because of staff problems, he expressed the hope that it would be resumed in future.

43. His delegation noted with satisfaction the enhanced coverage of development-related issues by DPI. The Department should endeavour to strike a reasonable balance between peace-keeping and security matters and development issues. He commended the efforts of DPI to integrate the United Nations information centres with the UNDP offices, on a case-by-case basis and in close

consultation with the Governments concerned, and he reiterated his request that DPI strengthen its activities in the Republic of Korea.

44. Since the previous year the Government of the Republic of Korea had been engaged in a vigorous national reform campaign aimed at improving the quality of life in the country. One of the key elements in the campaign was the active and open participation of the general public and the mass media. In that connection, the Government had been eagerly pursuing information-sharing programmes with other Governments and with the private sector. His delegation wished to point out that there were still some countries which remained in a state of self-imposed isolation and where freedom of the press was infringed upon or totally suppressed. The Government of the Republic of Korea called on the international community to make greater efforts to ensure that the citizens of those countries were able to enjoy their basic human rights and live in a more open society.

45. Mr. DOUGLAS (United States of America) said that now that the cold war had ended, the international community had a unique opportunity to ensure the free flow of information, which was vital to the needs of open societies. Freedom of the press and freedom of expression were essential to democracy and to shaping the world of the twenty-first century. The right of the individual to seek, receive and impart information without interference was a fundamental human right. Peace-keeping had become a large part of United Nations operations, and public information was an important component of that function. It must therefore be ensured that public information was integrated into all peace-keeping efforts.

46. The Department of Public Information had accomplished a great deal in its work. The issues that the Department worked on ranged from peace-keeping operations to economic and social development and to the advancement of human rights and of the status of women.

47. His delegation was gratified by the Assistant Secretary-General's indication that in its quest for innovative and cost-effective ways of delivering the United Nations message, the Department of Public Information had been greatly assisted by the statements made by members of the Committee on Information. His delegation considered financial reform in the United Nations to be a top priority and looked forward to continuing to prune unnecessary costs and to shifting resources to where they were most needed. Integrating United Nations information centres with United Nations field offices was an excellent example of positive direction in that regard.

48. The United States of America remained firmly committed to efforts to revitalize management, evaluate and streamline the Department of Public Information and reallocate resources based on the current needs of the United Nations. In the area of specific programme activities, it felt that the Committee on Information could assist the Department in adopting difficult management decisions, identifying priorities and helping to locate the resources to meet them; support the Assistant Secretary-General's call for flexibility with a view to effective operation; and strengthen the public affairs and

information component in peace-keeping and involve the Department in discussions with experts regarding peace-keeping operations.

49. Mr. BATAINEH (Jordan) said that information was an important means of socio-cultural progress and also an instrument of peace. Freedom of the press and of information was a guarantee of all other freedoms. In that respect, access to the mass media was of particular importance. The existing information system must be reviewed in order to eliminate the remaining shortcomings. Developed and developing countries needed an information system which would make it possible to report on events in a balanced and objective manner. It was to be hoped that developed countries, because of their strong resource potential, would help developing countries acquire technological means for the transmission, collection and dissemination of information, which would help overcome the gap between them.

50. Jordan recognized that the Department of Public Information played an important and effective role in the work of the United Nations and endeavoured to report on the problems facing the Organization in an objective and impartial manner. He hoped that the Department would take steps to improve the dissemination of information about the work of the United Nations among the public. The United Nations was not only an instrument of peace, but also a body concerned with solving problems of social, economic and humanitarian development.

51. The Department should review its priorities and take into account the changes which had taken place in the world, particularly in the light of events in the Middle East. Peace-keeping operations must be covered in such a way as to give the public a correct idea of the nature, goals and purposes of such operations, especially in the regions where they were being carried out and in the countries which were providing military contingents. Jordan greatly valued the role of UNESCO, which, along with the Department, was implementing the International Programme for the Development of Communication, and also attached great importance to the organization of seminars on the mass media, which helped strengthen the principle of the freedom and pluralism of the press. The organization at Sana'a of a seminar for Arab countries on public information questions would also contribute to that goal.

52. Jordan agreed that the United Nations information centres were communications channels which enabled people in different countries to become acquainted with the work and goals of international organizations and therefore supported steps to strengthen the centres in the context of the reorganization of the work of the United Nations. The old system of geographical distribution of the centres must also be reviewed. In that connection Jordan, as an active participant in peace-keeping operations, was very interested in the opening of an information centre in Amman and counted on the Committee's support in that matter.

53. Mr. ALSAIDI (Yemen) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the Chairman of the Group of 77; he would therefore confine himself to some points of particular interest to Yemen.

54. Since its reunification in 1990, Yemen had upheld the right of its citizens to the free flow of information, freedom of thought and assembly and the freedom to choose among political parties. Hence Yemen, a multiparty State, had one of the freest presses in the Arab world. The internal difficulties experienced by Yemen during the course of the year had been exploited by external forces with the objective of impeding the development of a free, democratic and prosperous society in Yemen. It was quite clear how biased and subjective the reporting by some of the Arab press of the events in Yemen had been. In contrast, the Western press, which was constantly accused of lacking in objectivity, had been far more objective and honest.

55. His delegation commended the decision of the Department of Public Information and UNESCO to hold a seminar on promoting independent and pluralistic Arab media at Sana'a in 1995. The continued cooperation between the Department and UNESCO in the implementation of the International Programme for the Development of Communication was essential.

56. The Department of Public Information should continue its valuable programme on the Palestine question. The progress made recently towards peace in the Middle East was another argument in favour of opening a United Nations information centre at Amman.

57. Mr. KARSGAARD (Canada) thanked the Assistant Secretary-General for his efforts to improve the efficiency of the Department of Public Information (DPI). The demands for information about the work of the United Nations could be met within a fixed budget through adaptation to new technologies that permitted the dissemination of large amounts of information as well as the targeting of key audiences.

58. Ideally, information should help bridge the gap between reality and perception. A well-presented fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations would highlight the Organization's accomplishments and contribute to a better understanding of its activities.

59. In spite of information campaigns on the range of United Nations priorities, public perception of the Organization in Canada and many other countries was shaped largely by its performance where blue berets were deployed. For that reason, his delegation welcomed the increased attention given by DPI to peace-keeping in recent years and encouraged it to continue its efforts in that field.

60. His delegation believed that DPI could do more than simply foster better public understanding of peace-keeping. It could help to make peace-keeping operations a success. In that regard, radio played a special role; for example, in the case of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), radio had contributed to the holding of a democratic election. That was also true of the operation in Rwanda where, without a radio station, the United Nations would not have been able to counter the propaganda broadcast by Radio Mille Collines. His delegation considered that information activities should be fully incorporated into the original concept of every operation. DPI had a role

to play in providing expert advice on how to tailor such activities in order to maximize the effectiveness of United Nations peace-keeping operations and help gain the support of the Security Council, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Fifth Committee.

61. DPI should contribute to the significant enhancement of the press and public information function for peace-keeping missions and in particular for rapid deployment at the start of a peace-keeping operation of a robust and professional media outreach programme. The resources freed as a result of the eradication of apartheid could be used to settle remaining conflicts. In Haiti, for example, the United Nations had missed an opportunity to promote democratic development when it had not provided assistance in establishing a radio station.

62. Mr. MOUBARAK (Lebanon) said that information was the key to success in any endeavour - political, economic, social, cultural or technological. The lack of information not only lead to criticism and misunderstanding but also resulted in untruths and disinformation, which were even more harmful and disruptive. The achievements of the United Nations and its specialized agencies would go unnoticed and unfulfilled without the excellent work of its communication arm, namely, DPI and the United Nations information centres. In particular, the United Nations Information Centre in Beirut had operated throughout the entire war. DPI and its branches played a vital role in the modern information network, providing a global forum in a rapidly changing world. His delegation was looking forward to the convening of a seminar in the Arab countries in 1995 with a view to promoting the independence and pluralism of the media. On the subject of merging the informational activities of United Nations information centres and UNDP offices abroad, his delegation believed that those offices should remain independent of one another. The strengthening of United Nations information centres could promote the Organization's goals of cooperation among States, international security, sustainable development and environmental protection.

63. Lebanon had been a pioneer in the field of information in the Middle East. The first newspaper in Lebanon was founded in 1814. Moreover, Lebanon had also played a major role in the Arab renaissance movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Beirut had remained the publishing capital of the Arab world. The Government of Lebanon was aware that an advanced information structure was the key to economic and cultural success. The Lebanese Parliament had adopted, the previous week, a new law on the media that ensured freedom of expression and at the same time ended the anarchy of the press that had often prevailed during the war. Coverage of information on the developing countries must improve. Unfortunately, developing countries did not have the same access to world press coverage as did developed countries. As freedom and the flow of information spread throughout the world, international peace and security would prevail. To that end, United Nations goals must be publicized in both developed and developing countries.

64. Mr. JELBAN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) commended the current activities of DPI and drew attention to the need to improve its financing in order to enable it to achieve even greater success. The Department should endeavour to help the

developing countries establish a new information order. While his delegation upheld freedom of the press and the media, it noted at the same time that the media could become a dangerous political instrument that could be used to manipulate public opinion and interfere in the internal affairs of other States and encroach on their independence and sovereignty. One example of that was the information campaign against the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya that was being waged by several countries, in particular the United States of America, which had unjustly accused the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya of aiding and abetting terrorism. Such campaigns were conducted not for propaganda purposes alone but could also be used to prepare for aggression, as in the case of the attack on the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in 1986.

65. His delegation hoped that the United Nations would play a more effective role in mobilizing the international community's support in solving such priority issues as the question of Palestine, the occupied Arab territories, the recovery of the developing countries' economies, environmental protection and so on. He welcomed the positive role of UNESCO in increasing opportunities in the field of communication, which helped bridge the gap between the developed and the developing countries in the dissemination of information. At the same time, his delegation commended the work of the United Nations information centres, which should be supported in every way possible, since those centres provided a link between the United Nations and local media and helped strengthen the Organization's prestige. The question of merging the United Nations information centres with UNDP offices should be decided on the basis of the specific conditions in each individual case in order to ensure that such a merger did not have an adverse effect on the very different kinds of activities in which the information centres and the UNDP offices were engaged. Finally, he thanked the United Nations Library for its help in conducting research and carrying out other activities.

66. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would continue its consideration of the item at its next meeting and that he would invite the Committee to take decisions on draft resolutions on items relating to decolonization. He drew attention to document A/C.4/49/L.9, which indicated the order in which the Committee would take decisions on those resolutions. Consultations were continuing on the draft resolution on the question of Western Sahara. The sponsors of that draft had requested the Committee to take a decision on the draft resolution on the following day, and he intended to invite the Committee to take a decision on the draft at its next meeting. If he heard no comments, he would take it that the Committee had no objection to the proposed organization of work.

67. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.